

C O N F I D E N T I A L

To Jim Garrison from Harold Weisberg

Kerry Thornley, Phil Bostright and others

I flew to Omaha yesterday to interview Philip Bostright. I got his cooperation by promising that what we got from him would be kept entirely private, wouldn't be used in any writing of any kind, and would be seen by no one except you and any staff lawyer you might want to. I so pledged. He had several reasons. First, he is a State employee in an ultra-reactionary area and fears that the slightest publicity would jeopardize his position. Second, he regards some of it as of a personal and confidential nature, of a kind he would not ordinarily let anyone see or discuss with anyone else. Aside from wanting to keep our word because we gave it, I think it is important to do so because I think he can be of further help.

I got certain of his files from him. He will go over others and Xerox everything that has any reference, no matter how indirect, to anything or anybody in New Orleans. This includes letters, memoranda and his journal. The problem with the journal, aside from personal things, is that no writer wants to part with his. This is now encompasses four volumes. Also, it does not begin until May 1967.

He left New Orleans because of an intimate, personal failure. To now he has had a sort of mental block on New Orleans because of it. We spent a long day together, ending when he accompanied me to the plane. We waited in the cocktail lounge, and in that relaxing atmosphere he indicated that this veil may now be lifted, that he may recall more and will try, that he will note what occurs to him and write me about it, and that he will do whatever else he can that might be of use to us. This includes keeping as much of an eye as possible on Tommy Beckham and trying to visit and talk to Sandra Moffett McMains, who may be just across the river from where he lives. Tommy is running for Congress.

Among those things I got from him are his address book for the New Orleans period, an assortment of Courtney literature, with interesting indications, and some of Thornley, showing his connections with a newsletter "The Innovator" and some of its perspective.

In general, Bostright confirmed most of what I had been told by Barbara Carey. In no vital detail does he differ and he does add some details.

He has no recollection of any Courtney employment by Thornley and thinks this may have been the consequence of loose talk or bragging by Thornley, who was disappointed in not getting the job for which he applied. Bostright, sent by A-1 employment, Laroche, got it.

Bostright is 33 years old, 6-3 or 6-4 tall, thin, with dark eyes, a beard so black he has five o'clock shadow as soon as he shaves, yet is prematurely grey. His hair, which he wears long in length, is trimmed neatly and is not lower on the head and neck than normal. It is abundant on the top. He combs the sides back over the ears. It bushes out in front, with one forelock extending three inches or so from the forehead. (This is entirely different than in New Orleans. I got a picture taken in New Orleans from him, to show witnesses, and took several of his current appearance).

He lives at 3332² Harney St., where there is a downstairs pay phone to which he can be called (342-8739). He has a woman friend through whom he can get addresses (342-1439). He works nights, I believe beginning 11 p.m.

He lives quite modestly in what may fairly be called a garret, the rearranged attic, divided into two small rooms. It was apparent that he had, in advance of my visit, dragged all his stuff out and was going over it. The letters alone fill two boxes. He believes there will be very few of interest. A hasty check did not disclose any from Thornley, with whom he did correspond. He particularly wants to locate a card indicating Thornley had been in Mexico. He is now not certain that the card was mailed from Mexico. His clearest recollection is of the picture on the card, that of a famous cathedral preserved by the revolution as a monument to the abuses of the church. He believes that with his Ingersollian beliefs (Kerry had and was proud of and was forever quoting Ingersoll's writings of an anti-clerical nature) Kerry could have gotten this card just to have it and then used it in writing him.

From this address, Bostright publishes a magazine *Steppenwulf*, named for the Nobel prize-winning novel of the 50s by a German-Swiss writer whose name I have forgotten. It is non-political in content, with occasional prose, usually commentary or criticism.

Bostright was neatly and tastefully dressed, without affectation and with clean creases in his garments. He is intelligent, sensitive, college-educated (B.A.), soft-spoken, conservative in his expressions and its manner. He works at the State mental hospital (and has an interest in psychiatry sufficient for him to have had a stack of the professional magazines in his quarters). He prefers being an attendant here to teaching, which is possible for him, or journalism or public relations, in which fields he has apparently had experience, training or both. I think an additional reason is the regularity of his employment and hours, which gives him time for the magazine and his own poetry.

He was in New Orleans from August 1962 to January 1963. Since then his New Orleans connections have been slight. There was a time when he tried to preserve them in correspondence, but this yielded little and ended. Those with whom he corresponded are identified on the tapes (I have about three hours on tape, not including the time we spent eating, drinking and driving). He seems to think that one of those we should try and question closely is Vic Latham. If you'd like me to, I will. He thinks it likely that of Thornley's friends, the one most likely to have read "The Idle Warriors" is Latham, who considers himself somewhat of a poet. He exchanged a few letters with Al Thompson, Al Scott and Pat Patterson, and a few others. On the basis of what I heard, I am not confident that if he now has less subconscious unwillingness to think of New Orleans and the unpleasantness that caused him to leave there he will recall much of significance, except possibly detail. I do believe we can continue the interview and relationship by letter.

He was employed by Courtney because Courtney developed Cuban interests. Courtney was crusading for the blockade of Cuba. When JFK did this, Courtney had no more issue, called what Kennedy did a betrayal, and told Bostright that his job was over. I have samples of some of this, including radio-speech text, pamphlets, a few issues of the paper, some of the details of the organizing of a convention of the Conservative Party of America (xxxxxx whose "declaration of Conservative Principles" was "adopted at the Convention of Conservatives" xxxxx sponsored by "The Independent American Newspaper". The fifth item on its "Program of Action" was "To liberate Cuba", clearly by military action, including the "capture" of Chinese and Russians and holding them as hostages.

(The October 1962 issue, which I have not had a chance to read carefully, appeared with major attention to "Conservative Protest Conference and 'Blockade Cuba' Rally to be held in Chicago", the headline over the major story, with another headed, "Time To Blockade Cuba". When Kennedy did just that, the issue was made over, turned out with the date "October 29, 1962" given as the "revised" date of

publication, with these stories removed. The major headline then read, "Blockade Cuba Extravaganza a Cruel Hoax". The scheduled, expensive conference was then cancelled.)

Courtney was aware that Bostright held opinions favorable to Kennedy. Bostright does not suggest this had anything to do with the end of his employment. He says Courtney was specific, that he was hired for Cuba work and that was over. The Kennedy blockade took Courtney's issue and basis of appeal away from him. He says that Courtney treated him well, paying the fees he had paid the employment agency. He says Courtney is, in his own terms, honest, believing the strange stuff he says. But he describes the employment as very strange. The place was always locked, very securely. When he got to work he had to knock on the door, when he was admitted, usually by one of the girls opening mail, etc., and the door was locked again. The only person not on the payroll he recalls having seen there was Kent's brother, and that, as I recall, on only one occasion. Money came in in contributions. Courtney referred to large contributions, but never specified their source.

On the tape there is a discussion of what Barbara called "agents". That may be an excessive description. Without doubt Courtney got and used material from DRE, most likely from Miami, and he got information from abroad. This seems to have originated from one Hilsaire du Berrier, who had no sources of income known to Bostright yet seemed to be always travelling through Europe. Courtney had a high opinion of du Berrier and published his 30-page pamphlet "Labor's International Network". A brief account of the author's soldier-of-fortune career reflects his ~~employment~~ employment by the OSS as a Far-eastern specialist, after V-J day. This must have been very brief or du Berrier also became CIA, for it was not very long after V-J day at the latest that CIA was formed.

In addition to this pamphlet, ^{also} I borrowed and promised we would return in good condition, Kent and Phoebe Courtney's "America's Unelected Rulers", and attack on the Council on Foreign Relations, and "The Case of General Edwin A Walker" and their book on his case. Bostright describes Walker and possessed of a poor command of English and very bad grammar. Courtney asked him to go over Walker's stuff to make an appraisal. In general, from his own knowledge, he confirms what Barbara said from hearsay, that the Courtney's undertook the Walker defense, including the fund raising, that including bail.

In this connection, my interview with Bostright is a remarkable endorsement of the acuteness and accuracy of Barbara's recollections.

With regard to his address book, with which he trusted me, he emphasized his request that we make no public use of it and that access to it be restricted to your staff lawyers. I promised we'd use it only as a confidential research material. From it he was able to supply the names of a few people whose identities were only partial, and their addresses as of the time he was there.

When I can get the tape transcribed, I may perhaps amplify this. That will take some time, for it is about three hours long. I promised him a copy that he wants as a record and that he will go over to see if, after thinking about this for a while and having his mind opened a bit, he can recall anything else or more detail on any of what he provided. Much of the tape will require no commentary. Much, also, is just chatter.

Kerry Thornley, he says, like him very much. It was Barbara's feeling that Thornley just hung around. Bostright says almost the same thing, in a different way. He seems to feel that if he were to have a face-to-face meeting with Thornley, Kerry might, even now, speak to him as he would not to others.

He has an unflattering opinion of Thornley, his intelligence and his writing. He has seen something I did not know exists, Thornley poetry. Very little of it and not much quality. When he knew Thornley, Kerry was a busboy at the hotel. He knows everyone in the Quarter talked about going to Mexico, but few did it. He does not know how Thornley financed it. He confirms Barbara on never having seen Thornley bum anything from anybody.

Kerry's satisfaction, if not his elation, over the assassination, was and is still very distasteful to Boatright. He alluded to this several times. I think it is not motivated by his liking for JFK alone. He repeated to me what he told Barbara, that Thornley is the kind of guy who would enjoy being indicted. When I asked him if this included going to jail, he replied, if my recollection is accurate, that Thornley would not have considered the duration of imprisonment but would have been satisfied at the fact of it, that it would have meaning for him.

He likes Martin McAuliffe. I may be wrong, but I think he said that when he knew McA, his office was in the Trade Mart. It may be that this was later, when he wrote. He met McA through the then-mistress of Dick Hoffman (see my memo on Patricia). He has the same opinion of Hoffman as an artist-very good-as my other sources. He knows nothing of Mike Sletter. This woman, not a very good typist, is one McA used to type the ms of a book he was writing. Through her McA saw a volume of Boatright's poetry, which he liked. This is how they met. McA is not much of a correspondent, so he thinks the letters will disclose little.

Boatright seems to shun everything political. He says he never had any political discussion with McA that he can recall and never heard McA say anything about the FDC or successor groups-and the names of those connected with them meant nothing to him. His opinion of McA is such that he says he thinks he would have been involved in such activities only through genuine belief. He does not recall ever seeing Thornley and McA together and has no reason to believe they ever met. He never saw Thornley out of the Quarter, never went talking with him, had no knowledge of any P.O. box Thornley may have had, and never saw him in any office, such as that of FDC. From his description of McA, I wonder if any useful purpose would be served by my attempt to establish a relationship with him. Do you want me to? I am now, I think, in a position to do this on a basis you cannot.

When Barbara first mentioned him, I got interested, as I think McA also did. He says if we approach her to be extremely careful, because she has a very "protective" feeling about her friends. She undoubtedly knows Thornley and most of the Quarter people of interest. She is another and a different kind of Barbara Reid. He knows nothing of her husband. If he was alive, Boatright never saw him. They were at least separated. I think Barbara said the husband was a pilot. Boatright says "I was, and I immediately wonder who trained her! She is a painter and is usually outside painting in good weather, he does not know where. Her address when he knew her was Apt. 202, 638 Royal. This was near when he once lived. (His other address was 935 St. Peter. He rented this from one Udell and the Royal St. apartment, whose address is on the tape, from Gondolfo.) I think I should speak to him first, as with Barbara. He describes her as in her mid-or late 40s. He seems not to recall Barbara Reid. Therefore, someone performing the same services from us in a different part of that society, it seems to me, might fill some things in better.

He is willing to try and speak to Sandra McMains and to try and make her understand that your interest in her will in no way damage her but that what she has done to date may already have. I told him the Larry Howard story, explained the connections and interests of those by whom she has been influenced, etc. I tried to call you a number of times to get the address, which may have been on just the other side of the river, but could not reach you. I'd have tried it myself while I was there if I'd have known where she is.

newsletter called "Innovator". Kerry Thornley was connected with it. He was one of two "contributing editors", the other, to whom most credits are given, is El Ray. Richard Bray is listed as editor. The address is P.O. Box 34713, Los Angeles, and before I deliver this I will have a check out there instituted, with an attempt to get all issues.

The December 1964 issue had a review of "The Cold War and the Income Tax" by Thornley and that of April 1965 his "Comrade Oswald and the Holy Cause of Mankind". That same month, "Innovator" offered a new "service", described as "confidential subscriptions". The next month it had an article on the "enslavement" of Cuba. In June it had one on "self-protection". This may or may not be misleading as will be seen, for the April 1965 issue has an article on page three by Ian Beale entitled "Preparing For Survival: ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Firearms" (attached). It recommends, remarkably, a two-inch barrel pistol which it says is not at all accurate but makes hell of a lot of noise and scares people. It also has a "rubber-band holster" ideally suited for concealing such a weapon, the sole purpose of such a "holster". It recommends hiding the pistol under the under-drawers. It makes no reference to women. It also says that in many states this is illegal.

Boatright thinks Thornley sent him this mailing, which is postmarked at Lynwood, Calif. 4/9/66. The zip code, 90262, means it is in the L.A. area. The addressing seems to have been by a plate, and he gets nothing else addressed in exactly this fashion. There is no "Mr." and his name is not given as "Phil" in anything else he gets. He thinks it is Thornley, addressing him in the informal manner of conversation, when he did this.

The source of the information on the pistol holster is its "developer", and ex-policeman, Jack Pierce. He, it turns out, "is an occasional contributor to 'Innovator'." I wonder if his name crops up, in other connections, like Minute-men, Rangers, etc.

None of the advertising included in the mailing gives any names. Only the P.O. address. The newsletter is 4pp long, neat, as is the literature, not cheap, and printed by offset. Giving no names is odd for several reasons: it means the names have no special appeal and it indicates a kind of secrecy not common in ordinary publication.

One of the comments Boatright made about Thornley and women came out when I was questioning him about a Latin waitress at Carlos Castillos, about whom I had a signle of Thornley interest from Barbara Carey. Thornley's interest in them was entirely and fundamentalist sexual, not in the sense of love but as one would want a whore. His attitude was sort of contemptuous, an unpleasant necessity and nothing else. Boatright ~~ex~~ seemed surprised that Thornley is married. This waitress might be worth trying to find. She is intelligent, seemingly well educated.

Boatright does not like Castillo, who he considers crude and harsh, although sometimes displaying the kindest Latin courtesies. He knows nothing of any activities or interests other than the restaurant ("the food is good, if you like Mexican food") that Carlos may have had. Specifically, nothing of politics, smuggling, raids, boats, housing above his place, etc.

If I send him a set of pictures of those in whom we are interested, he will go over them, identify any he might know and say what he knows. I am not suggesting there is a good chance, but I think it is worth taking. He describes the life he led in the Quarter as not typical of it. He worked and was not boozing around and socializing as much as most.

My overall impression is that he is a serious man, honest

(reasonable and understandable) concepts. He has a strong sense of honor and ethics. He lives by his beliefs. He is willing to and does forego those things that are important to others and not as important to him in order to be able to do and have those things that are important to him. For example, he lives quite modestly, has no car. The jacket he ~~wore~~ yesterday is the one in which he was photographed more than four years ago. It showed no signs of wear. He seems rather tolerant of things he does not agree with and people he does not like.

One of the few strong expressions of any kind that he made was about his local Congressman, Cunningham, who he describes as an ultra-reactionary, also a light-weight. A Jew ran against Cunningham in the last election. His home was painted with swastikas. Cunningham was totally silent, failing in any way to disassociate himself from the act.

He is not a hippie, cannot understand some of their "protest". However, he has had his own kind of detachment. I think it now may be less.

Something does seem to be on his mind about this. It may only be intellectual. We sat and had a few drinks at the airport while waiting for my plane. He brought up several things- I did not initiate them. He again alluded to his liking of New Orleans and the fact that he left only because of the failure of that part of his personal life. He suggests there now has been a catharsis. He also says that while arrangements were being made for my going to see him he had some misgivings. He at this time expressed them and said that, having met and spoken to me, they no longer exist. He is satisfied about us and our purposes. He will help in any way he can.

If I were to try, on the basis of what I learned from him, to date the timing of the card from Thornley, I would say it had to be after sometime in May 1963.

z There is something strikingly familiar about the picture of him taken in New Orleans, but I cannot place it. I showed him a number of pictures of Thornley from the newspapers. This is at some length on the tape. Of some he said that if I hadn't told him it was Thornley he'd never have guessed it. The one that most looked like Thornley as he knew him is from the Times-Picayune of 1.10.68. He described Thornley as both untidy and unclean, never with a beard but often with a several-days stubble. Although he handled food, his fingernails were always dirty. The one part of him that was the exception was his hair. That was always neat, as though pomaded.